

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Figure 2. In Figure German language labels are replaced with English language labels.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the above-identified application are respectfully requested. Claims 1-4, 6 and 8-18 remain pending.

The drawings are objected to for including labels that are not in the English language. A replacement sheet of Figure 2 is submitted herewith in which the German language labels are replaced by English language labels. Accordingly, withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4, 6 and 8-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,447,736 to Autenrieth et al. ("Autenrieth"). This ground of rejection is respectfully traversed.

Autenrieth does not render claim 1 obvious because Autenrieth does not disclose or suggest all of the elements of claim 1. For example, Autenrieth does not disclose or suggest "insulating plates are provided between the [*upper and lower*] end plates and layers which are respectively adjacent to the end plates."

Autenrieth discloses a system for water vapor reforming of a hydrocarbon that includes a modular reactor unit composed of stacked plates. Autenrieth discloses two different embodiments, and in the second embodiment a thermally insulating plate can be inserted between the different modules of the reactor unit.

Applicant's claim 1 recites separator devices to divide the stack into a plurality of function areas *and* insulating plates between the upper and lower end plates and the respectively adjacent layers. Accordingly, Autenrieth's mere disclosure of insulating plates *between different modules* does not disclose or suggest insulating plates *between the modules and end plates*. Therefore, Autenrieth does not render claim 1 obvious.

Claims 2-4, 6, 8-12, 15 and 17 are patentably distinguishable over Autenrieth at least by virtue of their dependency from claim 1. Furthermore, Autenrieth does not disclose or suggest an insulation layer insulating the stack from a surrounding environment as recited in claim 17.

Independent claim 13 recites similar elements to those discussed above with regard to claim 1, and accordingly is not obvious in view of Autenrieth. Claims 14, 16 and 18 are patentably distinguishable at least by virtue of their dependency from claim 13.

For at least those reasons stated above, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of claims 1-4, 6 and 8-18 as being obvious in view of Autenrieth be withdrawn.

Claims 1-4, 6 and 8-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious in view of the combination of U.S. Patent No. 6,159,434 to Gonjo et al.

("Gonjo"), German Patent Document No. DE 197 43 673 ("Schuessler") and U.S. Patent No. 5,270,127 to Koga et al. ("Koga"). This ground of rejection is respectfully traversed.

The combination of Gonjo, Schuessler and Koga does not render Applicant's claim 1 unpatentable because the combination does not disclose or suggest "insulating plates are provided between the [*upper and lower*] end plates and layers which are respectively adjacent to the end plates."

The Office Action acknowledges that Gonjo and Schuessler each do not disclose or suggest insulating plates arranged in the manner recited in Applicant's claim 1, and instead relies upon Koga. Specifically, the Office Action relies upon Koga's disclosure in column 10, lines 15-17 of heat insulators being interposed between the reformer, heat exchanger and shift converter.

Applicant's claim 1 recites separator devices to divide the stack into a plurality of function areas and insulating plates between the upper and lower end plates and the respectively adjacent layers. Accordingly, Koga's mere disclosure of heat insulators *between different units* does not disclose or suggest insulating plates *between the units and end plates*. Therefore, the combination of Gonjo, Schuessler and Koga does not render Applicant's claim 1 obvious.

Claims 2-4, 6, 8-12 and 15 are patentably distinguishable over the combination of Gonjo, Schuessler and Koga at least by virtue of their dependency from claim 1.

Independent claim 13 recites similar elements to those discussed above with regard to claim 1, and accordingly is not obvious in view of the combination of Gonjo, Schuessler and Koga. Claims 14 and 16 are patentably distinguishable at least by virtue of their dependency from claim 13.

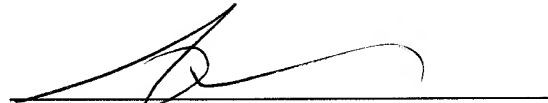
For at least those reasons stated above, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of claims 1-4, 6 and 8-16 as being obvious in view of the combination of Gonjo, Schuessler and Koga be withdrawn.

If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #102063.49153).

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Respectfully submitted,



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